

The solution to my life occurred to me one evening while I was ironing a shirt. It was simple but audacious. I went into the living room where my husband was watching television and I said, "I think I ought to have an office."

5        It sounded fantastic, even to me. What do I want an office for? I have a house; it is pleasant and roomy and has a view of the sea; it provides appropriate places for eating and sleeping, and having baths and conversations with one's friends. Also I have a garden; there is no lack of space.

10       No. But here comes the disclosure which is not easy for me: I am a writer. That does not sound right. Too presumptuous; phony, or at least unconvincing. Try again. I write. Is that better? I *try* to write. **That** makes it worse. Hypocritical humility. Well then?

15       It doesn't matter. However I put it, the words create their space of silence, the delicate moment of exposure. But people are kind, the silence is quickly absorbed by the solicitude of friendly voices, crying variously, how wonderful, and good for *you*, and well, that *is* intriguing. And what do you write, they  
20       inquire with spirit. Fiction, I reply, bearing my humiliation by this time with ease, even a suggestion of flippancy, which was not always mine, and again, again, the perceptible circles of dismay are smoothed out by such ready and tactful voices—which have however exhausted their stock of consolatory  
25       phrases, and can say only, "Ah!"

      So this is what I want an office for (I said to my husband): to write in. I was at once aware that it sounded like a finicky requirement, a piece of rare self-indulgence. To write, as everyone knows, you need a typewriter, or at least a pencil,  
30       some paper, a table and chair; I have all these things in a corner of my bedroom. But now I want an office as well.

      And I was not even sure that I was going to write in it, if we come down to that. Maybe I would sit and stare at the wall; even that prospect was not unpleasant to me. It was really the  
35       sound of the word "office" that I liked, its sound of dignity and peace. And purposefulness and importance. But I did not care to mention this to my husband, so I launched instead into a high-flown explanation which went, as I remember, like this:

      A house is all right **for a man to work in**. He brings his  
40       work into the house, a place is cleared for it; the house rearranges itself as best it can around him. Everybody recognizes that his work *exists*. He is not expected to answer the telephone, to find things that are lost, to see why the children are crying, or feed the cat. He can shut his door.  
45       Imagine (I said) a mother shutting her door, and the children knowing she is behind it; why, the very thought of it is

50 outrageous to them. A woman who sits staring into space, into a country that is not her husband's or her children's is likewise known to be an offence against nature. So a house is not the same for a woman. She is not someone who walks into the house, to make use of it, and will walk out again. She *is* the house; there is no separation possible.

Alice Munro, "The Office," *Dance of the Happy Shades*,  
Vintage 2000 [1968], pp. 59-60.

We hold it to be a moral axiom, that the misfortunes of a nation, as of individuals, may be traced to a retributive justice, worked out through its own crimes or follies. It is idle to look beyond ourselves for the source of whatever mischief of misery befall us; and if our aim  
5 is to regain happiness, we shall be very wide off the mark if we think to do so by attempting to correct others, under the flattering but false impression, that it is not us but our neighbours who have been in fault. Ireland should reflect upon this. Her grievance-mongers have now for more than a quarter of a century been agitating upon the  
10 pretended injustice of England towards her weaker sister, but without the least benefit, as we can perceive, accruing to the Irish people therefrom. They are still what they ever were, a discontented and starving people. And should they get their last demand, even Repeal, would they be better off? Not one bit. We are sure it could not be the  
15 case, whilst they persist in proclaiming themselves to be the finest peasantry in the world, and their island

The first flower of the ocean,  
first gem of the sea.

But indeed, at the present moment, it is ungenerous to upbraid;  
20 Ireland needs something more than advice. Famine, the most pinching, has added its horrors to the misery previously unbearable. Fathers see those they love slowly expiring for **the want of bread**. Men, sensitive and proud, are upbraided by their women for seeing them starve without a struggle for their rescue. Around them is  
25 plenty; rickyards, in full contempt, stand under their snug thatch, calculating the chances of advancing prices; or, the thrashed grain safely stored awaits only the opportunity of conveyance to be taken far away to feed strangers. Do the children of the soil hesitate to see the avarice of man, thus speculating on the visitations of Heaven and  
30 do they not resent the inhumanity as treason to our common nature? But a strong arm interposes to hold the maddened infuriates away. Property laws supersede those of Nature. Grain is of more value than blood. And if they attempt to take of the fatness of the land that belongs to their lords, death by musketry, is a cheap government  
35 measure to provide for the wants of a starving and incensed people.

This **must** not be. To prove the charge of injustice, oppression only is required. But England indignantly denies all that Irish agitators have alleged, and to prove the sincerity of her sympathy she must now advance unhesitatingly that relief which can alone save the Irish  
40 people. And she will do. England will give with an open hand. Will Ireland, like a sturdy vagrant, continue to curse a generosity that fails to satisfy inordinate, unreasonable demands? We shall not stay to calculate how much it may be abused; what considerable portion of the relief forwarded may go to swell the exactions of greedy,  
45 needy demagogues, whose stock in trade is their country's

misfortunes, and who, vampire like, suck the life-blood of their infatuated followers, fanning their victims with the idle wind of winged words to lull suspicion and secure repose. These are, indeed, the curse of that unhappy land. Cruel, unnatural leaders, who cannot  
50 meet each other without mutual smiling at the unsuspecting gullibility upon which they prey. With these however, in the present crisis, we have nothing too. Feed the distressed first, and perhaps they will listen afterwards to our exhortations and advice. In the meantime we must assist in the good work of forwarding the measures of relief that  
55 benevolent individuals throughout the kingdom are carrying out. Opportunity to help themselves, the late ministry, by the Labour Rate Act, have placed in the hands of the Irish gentlemen themselves. Able-bodied men at all events will get employment and wages. But this will not be sufficient; the aged and infirm, the women and  
60 children, have also to be provided for. Subscription lists should be opened in every town. A testimonial to Heaven for the mercy vouchsafed to ourselves could not have a more opportune moment to command contributions. Is gratitude alone due to man for the relief from corn taxation we have obtained this very year? Had it been  
65 otherwise, with the serious failure of our potato crop, what would now have been the price of bread? Give of the surplus gained but a trifling portion, and an ample fund will be provided for our Irish brethren.

But the crisis that is at hand, awful as it is, may, by a wise government, be made productive of permanent good to the empire,  
70 that will more than compensate the temporary misery it occasions; for a liberal measure of relief, with full stores of cheap grain to distribute at low prices, would contrast beneficially for the English character, with the rapacity evinced by the Irish agitators.

"Food Riots In Ireland", *Pictorial Times*, October 10, 1846.

The introduction of Poor-laws into Ireland has been singularly barren of good results and good feeling. It has not been the means of feeding the people; it has almost ruined the landlords; and it has excited a storm of disapprobation in the only part of Ireland where the owners of property have hitherto done their duty, and where anything like prosperity or even comfort may be said to exist in the country. Ulster and Leinster are in arms against the proposition of the Government for a sixpenny rate in aid of the impoverished unions of Munster and Connaught. The people of these provinces are quite willing, it would appear, that the people of England and Scotland should be taxed to support the poor of Ireland, but they are not willing to put their own hands in their pockets for any such purpose. They will support the poor of Leinster and Ulster, but they will not aid in the support of those of Munster and Connaught. Great Britain, if she pleases, may, in addition to her own million-and-a-half of paupers, whom she finds it hard enough to maintain, burden herself either in whole or in part with the maintenance of two or three millions of paupers in the west of Ireland; but the east of Ireland will have nothing to do with the matter. Such in effect is the spirit of the speeches made at the county meeting of Fermanagh, and of the resolution just passed by the Newry Board of Guardians. It is no doubt a hard case upon the industrious districts of Ireland to be called upon to support a double lot of poor; and to be charged, after their strict duty has been performed, with the performance of what, in equal strictness, should be considered the duty of other people. But if hard upon the men of Leinster and Ulster, it would be still harder upon the men of England and Scotland **to be called upon** to feed the pauperism of all Ireland. The Newry Board of Guardians insist that "Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom, and that Ulster has no relations with Connaught which are not equally shared by every other division of the British empire, and repudiate the separating principle upon which the proposition of the Government proceeds. They emphatically deny that the industrious population of that province are under any moral obligation to sustain the burden of the poverty of any other province of Ireland, to the origination of which no default of theirs has in any way contributed; and they deprecate the purpose for which the unjust impost is proposed to be levied, being firmly persuaded that the effect would be the taking away from the Poor-law of whatever moral tendency may be attributed to it, and the removal of all motives to personal exertion; while, in their opinion, any legislative arrangement for relief of destitution should be directed to the extinction of pauperism, the promotion of industry and morality, and the individualising of responsibility."

45 This is doubtless true enough; but the Newry people forget one very  
essential point which must be taken into consideration before the  
other "divisions of the British Empire" can be called upon to pay for  
the pauperism of Munster or Connaught. Ireland pays **no assessed**  
**taxes** and no Income-tax; and in this very comfortable exemption for  
50 Ireland the "separating principle" has been already conceded. If  
Ulster and Leinster object to separation in the other, and only  
consent to pay for the support of Irish pauperism out of the national  
taxes then Ireland shall contribute her fair share towards the general  
taxation of the Empire, in the shape of Window Duties and the  
55 Income-tax. Doubtless this would not meet the views of the rate-  
payers of Leinster and Ulster; but they may be assured that the  
people of Great Britain can have little sympathy with them in their  
agitation against the "rate in aid" unless upon such terms as we have  
stated. England and Scotland have made many sacrifices for Munster  
60 and Connaught. It is not just that Leinster and Ulster should escape  
all liability.

*The Illustrated London News*, March 3, 1849.

The vast number of persons who quitted Europe to seek new homes in the western hemisphere in the year 1847, is without a precedent in history. Of the aggregate I cannot definitely speak but to be within the limits of truth, they exceeded 350,000. More than one half of  
5 these emigrants were from Ireland and to this portion was confined the devouring pestilence. It is a painful task to trace the causes that led to such fatal consequences – some of them may perhaps be hidden but many are too plainly visible. These wretched people were flying from known misery into unknown and tenfold aggravated  
10 misfortune. That famine which compelled so many to emigrate became itself a cause of the pestilence. But that the principal causes were produced by injustice and neglect, is plainly proven.

Many, as I have already stated, were sent out at the expense of their landlords. These were consequently the poorest and most abject of  
15 the whole and suffered the most. No doubt the motives of some landlords were benevolent but all they did was to pay for the emigrants' passage – this done, these gentlemen washed their hands of all accountability transferring them to the shipping agent whose object was to stow away the greatest possible number between the  
20 decks of the vessels chartered for the purpose. That unwarrantable inducements were held out to many I am aware, causing some to leave their homes who would not otherwise have done so. They were given to understand that they would be abundantly provided for during the voyage and that they were certain of finding immediate  
25 employment upon their arrival at a dollar per day.

Another serious injury was done to many families who had previously experienced the blessings of temperance from being, upon their arrival at the different ports where they were to embark, obliged to lodge in public houses of the worst description whose proprietors,  
30 knowing that they possessed a little stock of money, seduced them to violate their "pledge" under the specious pretext that they were no longer bound by its obligations and that whiskey was the very best preventive of seasickness.

After a detention, often of many days, the vessel at length ready for  
35 sea, numbers were shipped that were quite unfit for a long voyage. True they were inspected and so were the ships but from the limited number of officers appointed for the purpose, many oversights occurred. In Liverpool, for instance, if I am rightly informed, there was staff of but five or six men to inspect the mass of emigrants and  
40 survey the ships in which there sailed from that port 107,474.

An additional heavy infliction was their sufferings on ship-board from famine – the legal allowance for an adult being one pound of food in

twenty-four hours. But perhaps the most cruel wrong was in allowing  
crowds of already infected beings to be huddled up together in the  
45 confined holds, there to propagate the distemper which there was no  
physician to stay. The sufferings consequent upon such treatment I  
have endeavoured to portray in the previous narrative which – alas! –  
is but a feeble picture of the unmitigated trials endured by these  
most unhappy beings. Nor were their sufferings ended with the  
50 voyage. Oh, no! far from it. Would that I could represent the  
afflictions I witnessed at Grosse Isle! I would not be supposed to  
think that the medical officers situated there did not exercise the  
greatest humanity in administering their disagreeable duties which  
consisted not in relieving the distress of the emigrants but in  
55 protecting their country from contamination. Still, it was most  
afflicting that after combating the dangers of the sea, enduring  
famine, drought and sickness, the wretched survivors should still  
have to lie as uncared for as when in the centre of the Atlantic Ocean.

The inefficacy of the quarantine system is so apparent that it is  
60 needless to particularize its defects, neither need I repeat the details  
of the grievous aggravations of their trials heaped by it upon the  
already tortured emigrants. My heart bleeds when I think of the  
agony of the poor families – who, as yet undivided, had patiently  
borne their trials, ministering to each other's wants – when torn from  
65 each other. Painful as it was to behold the bodies of those who died  
at sea committed to the deep, yet the separation of families was  
fraught with much greater misery.

*Robert Whyte's 1847 Famine Ship Diary. The Journey of an Irish  
Coffin Ship. Ed. Mangan, James J. Dublin: Mercier Press, 1994 [The  
Ocean Plague: or, a Voyage to Quebec on an Irish Emigrant Vessel:  
By A Cabin Passenger. Boston: Coolidge and Wiley, 1848], pp. 88-90.*



Another winter is approaching, and Ireland again appeals to the sympathies and solitudes of her provident and more fortunate sister. The rebellion has been suppressed, but not the famine.

5 Throughout extensive districts there is as great a failure of the potato as there was two years since, and with a return of the cause we must expect a renewal of the disastrous consequences. There are, it is true, some circumstances now in our favour. The white crops have not been as deficient as in 1846. There is not a European famine, nor is there likely to be. We have also the benefit of our  
10 former experience. All things considered, therefore, the difficulty will confine itself to the relief of certain districts, with existing agencies, and as much as possible from the local resources. For many weeks, indeed, considerable portions of the western population, as, for example, on the wild coast of ill-fated Connemara, have been  
15 supported by regular doles of oatmeal-porridge, supplied from the union funds. If such is the case now, and has continued so even in the midst of the harvest and of the season for the fishery, what will it be when the earth is locked by frost, or wrapped in snow, and when the ocean denies alike to the fisherman and the emigrant its wonted  
20 hospitality?

As measures of relief are in actual operation, and we have not to construct at the eleventh hour an original machinery for the purpose, there will be no overpowering pressure on official responsibility and public resources. What, then, is the work to be done? In the first  
25 place, there are vast accumulations of misery in certain parts, owing partly to the immigration of outcasts, and partly to the secluded nature of the region, and the consequent extraordinary ignorance and inaction of the people. There are corners of Ireland which are the Ultima Thule of civilization, and where a Cimmerian gloom hangs over the human soul. The people there have always been listless,  
30 improvident, and wretched, under whatever rulers. Ever since the onward Celtic wave was first stopped by the great Atlantic barrier, these people have remained the same, and their present misfortune is that they are simply what they have always been, and that from want of variety and intermixture they have not participated in the  
35 great progress of mankind. When we see a dense population on one of the finest shores of the world, with an inexhaustible ocean before their eyes, yearly allowing immense shoals of fish to pass visibly before their eyes, with scarcely to exact a toll from the passing  
40 masses of food, we must either rebuke their perverseness or pity their savage condition. We do pity them, because they have yet to be civilized. In Canada we have Indians in our borders, many of whom we yearly subsidize and maintain. In Ireland we have Celts equally helpless and equally the objects of national compassion. Such cases  
45 are only to be met by some form of public alms. Should the local resources be utterly drained, or so severely drawn upon as to

paralyze industrial employment, England must make up her mind to some amount of imperial assistance, for the present at least.

50 But how far can Ireland maintain herself? That is a question which demands an immediate answer. It does not follow because there are districts of intense destitution that Ireland is, on the whole, unequal to the task of supporting her people. Nor is it so in fact. There is great wealth in Ireland. The state of cultivation, the value of the stock, and the produce, the manufactories, the pits, the mines, the  
55 edifices, and every other form of fixed wealth, has been immensely developed since the Union. We have given Ireland a commerce. Her ports are prosperous. The alleged decay of her cities is a gross fable. Dublin is a thriving metropolis, and if, as in every other metropolis, and not the least in London, certain streets are comparatively  
60 neglected and some mansions are unoccupied or desecrated to plebeian uses, the beautiful suburbs, on the other hand, especially in the Wicklow direction, exhibit the same increasing rows of cheerful villas as our own Camberwell or Islington. Within the last fifty years an immense number of **gentleman's seats** have been erected in all  
65 parts of the island, and roads have been made even beyond the wants of the people. A vast amount of British capital has been sunk with more or less profit. Such a country cannot be a pauper. She may have her poor; but it is ridiculous to imagine that she should throw herself altogether upon the alms of an English population, the greater  
70 part of whom are as well acquainted with hunger, and far more familiar with toil, than the most unfortunate of our Irish neighbours.

*The Times*, London, Oct. 4, 1848.

[...] From August of 1974 to August of 1976, the record shows steady progress upward toward prosperity, peace, and public trust. My record is one of progress, not platitudes. My record is one of specifics, not smiles. My record is one of performance, not promises. It is a record I am proud to run on. **It** is a record the American people - Democrats, Independents, and Republicans alike - will support on November 2.

For the next 4 years I pledge to you that I will hold to the steady course we have begun. But I have no intention of standing on the record alone.

We will continue winning the fight against inflation. We will go on reducing the dead weight and impudence of bureaucracy.

We will submit a balanced budget by 1978.

We will improve the quality of life at work, at play, and in our homes and in our neighborhoods. We will not abandon our cities. We will encourage urban programs which assure safety in the streets, create healthy environments, and restore neighborhood pride. We will return control of our children's education to parents and local school authorities.

We will make sure that the party of Lincoln remains the party of equal rights.

We will create a tax structure that is fair for all our citizens, one that preserves the continuity of the family home, the family farm, and the family business.

We will ensure the integrity of the social security system and improve Medicare so that our older citizens can enjoy the health and the happiness that they have earned. There is no reason they should have to go broke just to get well.

We will make sure that this rich Nation does not neglect citizens who are less fortunate, but provides for their needs with compassion and with dignity.

We will reduce the growth and the cost of government and allow individual breadwinners and businesses to keep more of the money that they earn.

We will create a climate in which our economy will provide a meaningful job for everyone who wants to work and a decent standard of life for all Americans. We will ensure that all of our young people have a better chance in life than we had, an education they can use, and a career they can be proud of.

We will carry out a farm policy that assures a fair market price for the farmer, encourages full production, leads to record exports, and eases the hunger within the human family. We will never use the bounty of America's farmers as a pawn in international diplomacy. There will be no embargoes.

We will continue our strong leadership to bring peace, justice, and

economic progress where there is turmoil, especially in the Middle East. We will build a safer and saner world through patient negotiations and dependable arms agreements which reduce the danger of conflict and horror of thermonuclear war. While I am  
50 President, we will not return to a collision course that could reduce civilization to ashes.

We will build an America where people feel rich in spirit as well as in worldly goods. We will build an America where people feel proud about themselves and about their country.

55 We will build on performance, not promises; experience, not expediency; real progress instead of mysterious plans **to be revealed** in some dim and distant future. The American people are wise, wiser than our opponents think. They know who pays for every campaign promise. They are not afraid of the truth. We will tell them the truth.

60 From start to finish, our campaign will be credible; it will be responsible. We will come out fighting, and we will win. Yes, we, have all seen the polls and the pundits who say our party is dead. I have heard that before. So did Harry Truman. I will tell you what I think. The only polls that count are the polls the American people go to on  
65 November 2. And right now, I predict that the American people are going to say that night, "Jerry, you have done a good job, keep right on doing it."

70 As I try in my imagination to look into the homes where families are watching the end of this great convention, I can't tell which faces are Republicans, which are Democrats, and which are Independents. I cannot see their color or their creed. I see only Americans. [...]

President Gerald R. Ford's Remarks in Kansas City Upon Accepting the 1976 Republican Presidential Nomination, August 19, 1976.

<http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/speeches/760733.asp>

**GOLDWATER, Barry M. *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960). Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc. 1990, p. 18-20.**

The root difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals of today is that Conservatives take account of the *whole* man, while the Liberals tend to look only at the material side of man's nature. The Conservative believes that man is, in part, an economic, an animal creature; but that he is also a spiritual creature with spiritual needs and spiritual desires. What is more, these needs and desires reflect the *superior* side of man's nature, and thus take precedence over his economic wants. Conservatism therefore looks upon the enhancement of man's spiritual nature as the primary concern of political philosophy. Liberals, on the other hand,—in the name of a concern for "human beings"—regard the satisfaction of economic wants as the dominant mission of society. They are, moreover, in a hurry. So that their characteristic approach is to harness the society's political and economic forces into a collective effort to *compel* "progress." In this approach, I believe they fight against Nature.

Surely the first obligation of a political thinker is to understand the nature of man. The Conservative **does not claim** special powers of perception on this point, but he does claim a familiarity with the accumulated wisdom and experience of history, and he is not too proud to learn from the great minds of the past.

The first thing he has learned about man is that each member of the species is a unique creature. Man's most sacred possession is his individual soul—which has an immortal side, but also a mortal one. The mortal side establishes his absolute differentness from every other human being. *Only a philosophy that takes into account the essential differences between men, and, accordingly, makes provision for developing the different potentialities of each man can claim to be in accord with Nature.* We have heard much in our time about "the common man." It is a concept that pays little attention to the history of a nation that grew great through the initiative and ambition of uncommon men. The Conservative knows that to regard man as part of an undifferentiated mass is to consign him to ultimate slavery.

Secondly, the Conservative has learned that the economic and spiritual aspects of man's nature are inextricably intertwined. He cannot be economically free, or even economically efficient, if he is

enslaved politically; conversely, man's political freedom is illusory if he is dependent for his economic needs on the State.

The Conservative realizes, thirdly, that man's development, in both its spiritual and material aspects, is not something that can be directed by outside forces. Every man, for his individual good and for the good of his society, is responsible for his own development. The choices that govern his life are choices that he must make: they cannot be made by any other human being, or by a collectivity of human beings. If the Conservative is less anxious than his Liberal brethren to increase Social Security "benefits," it is because he is more anxious than his Liberal brethren that people be free throughout their lives to spend their earnings **when and as they see fit**.

Conservatism, throughout history, has regarded man neither as a potential pawn of other men, nor as a part of a general collectivity in which the sacredness and the separate identity of individual human beings are ignored. Throughout history, true Conservatism has been at war equally with autocrats and with "democratic" Jacobins. The true Conservative was sympathetic with the plight of the hapless peasant under the tyranny of the French monarchy. And he was equally revolted at the attempt to solve that problem by a mob tyranny that paraded under the banner of egalitarianism. The conscience of the Conservative is pricked by *anyone* who would debase the dignity of the individual human being. Today, therefore, he is at odds with dictators who rule by terror, and equally with those gentler collectivists who ask our permission to play God with the human race.

With this view of the nature of man, it is understandable that the Conservative looks upon politics as the art of achieving the maximum amount of freedom for individuals that is consistent with the maintenance of social order. The Conservative is the first to understand that the practice of freedom requires the establishment of order: it is impossible for one man to be free if another is able to deny him the exercise of his freedom. But the Conservative also recognizes that the political power on which order is based is a self-aggrandizing force; that its appetite grows with eating. He knows that the utmost vigilance and care are required to keep political power within its proper bounds.

*"[President Bush is] an engaging person, but I think for some reason he's been captured by the neoconservatives around him."*

--Howard Dean, *U.S. News & World Report*, August 11, 2003

WHAT EXACTLY IS NEOCONSERVATISM? Journalists, and now even presidential candidates, speak with an enviable confidence on who or what is "neoconservative," and seem to assume the meaning is fully revealed in the name. Those of us who are designated as "neocons" are amused, flattered, or dismissive, depending on the context. It is reasonable to wonder: Is there any "there" there?

Even I, frequently referred to as the "godfather" of all those neocons, have had my moments of wonderment. A few years ago I said (and, alas, wrote) that neoconservatism had had its own distinctive qualities in its early years, but by now had been absorbed into the mainstream of American conservatism. I was wrong, and the reason I was wrong is that, ever since its origin among disillusioned liberal intellectuals in the 1970s, what we call neoconservatism has been one of **those** intellectual undercurrents that surface only intermittently. It is not a "movement," as the conspiratorial critics would have it. Neoconservatism is what the late historian of Jacksonian America, Marvin Meyers, called a "persuasion," one that manifests itself over time, but erratically, and one whose meaning we clearly glimpse only in retrospect.

Viewed in this way, one can say that the historical task and political purpose of neoconservatism would seem to be this: to convert the Republican party, and American conservatism in general, against their respective wills, into a new kind of conservative politics suitable to governing a modern democracy. That this new conservative politics is distinctly American is beyond doubt. There is nothing like neoconservatism in Europe, and most European conservatives are highly skeptical of its legitimacy. The fact that conservatism in the United States is so much healthier than in Europe, so much more politically effective, surely has something to do with the existence of neoconservatism. But Europeans, who think it absurd to look to the United States for lessons in political innovation, resolutely refuse to consider this possibility.

Neoconservatism is the first variant of American conservatism in the past century that is in the "American grain." It is hopeful, not lugubrious; forward-looking, not nostalgic; and its general tone is cheerful, not grim or dyspeptic. Its 20th-century heroes tend to be TR, FDR, and Ronald Reagan. Such Republican and conservative worthies as Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, Dwight Eisenhower, and Barry Goldwater are politely overlooked. Of course, those worthies are in no way overlooked by a large, probably the largest, segment of the Republican party, with the result that most Republican politicians know nothing and could not care less about neoconservatism.

Nevertheless, they cannot be blind to the fact that neoconservative policies, reaching out beyond the traditional political and financial base, have helped make the very idea of political conservatism more acceptable to a majority of American voters. Nor has it passed official notice that it is the neoconservative public policies, not the traditional Republican ones, that result in popular Republican presidencies.

One of these policies, most visible and controversial, is **cutting tax rates** in order to stimulate steady economic growth. This policy was not invented by neocons, and it was not the particularities of tax cuts that interested them, but rather the steady focus on economic growth. Neocons are familiar with intellectual history and aware that it is only in the last two centuries that democracy has become a respectable option among political thinkers. In earlier times, democracy meant an inherently turbulent political regime, with the "have-nots" and the "haves" engaged in a perpetual and utterly destructive class struggle. It was only the prospect of economic growth in which everyone prospered, if not equally or simultaneously, that gave modern democracies their legitimacy and durability.

The cost of this emphasis on economic growth has been an attitude toward public finance that is far less risk averse than is the case among more traditional conservatives. Neocons would prefer not to have large budget deficits, but it is in the nature of democracy – because it seems to be in the nature of human nature – that political demagoguery will frequently result in economic recklessness, so that one sometimes must shoulder budgetary deficits as the cost (temporary, one hopes) of pursuing economic growth. It is a basic assumption of neoconservatism that, as a consequence of the spread of affluence among all classes, a property-owning and tax-paying population will, in time, become less vulnerable to egalitarian illusions and demagogic appeals and more sensible about the fundamentals of economic reckoning. [...]

Irving Kristol, "The Neoconservative Persuasion", *Weekly Standard*, August 25, 2003.

<http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-neoconservative-persuasion/article/4246>



Thank you and good evening. The sponsor has been identified, but unlike most television programs, the performer hasn't been provided with a script. As a matter of fact, I have been permitted to choose my own words and discuss my own ideas regarding the choice that we  
5 face in the next few weeks.

I have spent most of my life as a Democrat. I recently have seen fit to follow another course. I believe that the issues confronting us cross party lines. Now, one side in this campaign has been telling us that the issues of this election are the maintenance of peace and  
10 prosperity. The line has been used, "We've never had it so good."

But I have an uncomfortable feeling that this prosperity isn't something on which we can base our hopes for the future. No nation in history has ever survived a tax burden that reached a third of its national income. Today, 37 cents out of every dollar earned in this  
15 country is the tax collector's share, and yet our government continues to spend 17 million dollars a day more than the government takes in. We **haven't balanced** our budget 28 out of the last 34 years. We've raised our debt limit three times in the last twelve months, and now our national debt is one and a half times  
20 bigger than all the combined debts of all the nations of the world. We have 15 billion dollars in gold in our treasury; we don't own an ounce. Foreign dollar claims are 27.3 billion dollars. And we've just had announced that the dollar of 1939 will now purchase 45 cents in its total value.

As for the peace that we would preserve, I wonder who among us  
25 would like to approach the wife or mother whose husband or son has died in South Vietnam and ask them if they think this is a peace that should be maintained indefinitely. Do they mean peace, or do they mean we just want to be left in peace? There can be no real peace  
30 while one American is dying some place in the world for the rest of us. We're at war with the most dangerous enemy that has ever faced mankind in his long climb from the swamp to the stars, and it's been said if we lose that war, and in so doing lose this way of freedom of ours, history will record with the greatest astonishment that those  
35 who had the most to lose did the least to prevent its happening. Well I think it's time we asked ourselves if we still know the freedoms that were intended for us by the Founding Fathers.

Not too long ago, two friends of mine were talking to a Cuban refugee, a businessman who had escaped from Castro, and in the  
40 midst of his story one of my friends turned to the other and said, "We don't know how lucky we are." And the Cuban stopped and said, "How lucky you are? I had some place to escape to." And in that sentence he told us the entire story. If we lose freedom here, there's no place to escape to. This is the last stand on earth.

45 And this idea that government is beholden to the people, that it has no other source of power except the sovereign people, is still the newest and the most unique idea in all the long history of man's relation to man.

This is the issue of this election: whether we believe in our capacity  
50 for self-government **or whether** we abandon the American revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capitol can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves.

You and I are told increasingly we have to choose between a left or right. Well I'd like to suggest there is no such thing as a left or right.  
55 There's only an up or down—[up] man's old, old-aged dream, the ultimate in individual freedom consistent with law and order, or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism. And regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motives, those who would trade our freedom for security have embarked on this downward course.

60 In this vote-harvesting time, they use terms like the "Great Society," or, as we were told a few days ago by the President, we must accept a greater government activity in the affairs of the people.

REAGAN, Ronald. "A Time for Choosing", October 27, 1964.

Transcript of a televised speech.

Source: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum,

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/>

BEROWNE [*Coming forward*] Now step I forth to whip hypocrisy.

Ah, good my liege, I pray thee pardon me.

Good heart, what grace hast thou, thus to reprove

These worms for loving, that art most in love?

5 Your eyes do make no coaches; in your tears

There is no certain Princess that appears.

You'll not be perjured, 'tis a hateful thing;

Tush, none but minstrels like of sonneting!

But are you not ashamed? Nay, are you not,

10 All three of you, to be thus much o'ershot?

You found his mote, the King your mote did see,

But I a beam do find in each of three.

O, what a scene of foolery have I seen,

Of sighs, of groans, of sorrow, and of teen!

15 O me, with what strict patience have I sat,

To see the king transformed to a gnat!

To see **great Hercules** whipping a gig,

And profound Solomon to tune a jig,

And Nestor play at push-pin with the boys,

20 And critic Timon laugh at idle toys!

Where lies thy grief? O, tell me, good Dumaine.

And, gentle Longaville, where lies thy pain?

And where my liege's? All about the breast.

A caudle, ho!

25 KING Too bitter is thy just.

Are we betrayed thus to thy over-view?

BEROWNE Not you to me, but I betrayed by you.

**I that am honest**, I that hold it sin

To break the vow I am engaged in –

30 I am betrayed by keeping company

With men like you, men of inconstancy.

When shall you see me write a thing in rhyme?

Or groan for Joan? Or spend a minute's time

In pruning me? When shall you hear that I

35 Will praise a hand, a foot, a face, an eye,

A gait, a state, a brow, a breast, a waist,

A leg, a limb –

KING Soft! Whither away so fast?  
 40 A true man, or a thief, that gallops so?  
 BEROWNE I post from love. Good lover, let me go.  
*Enter JAQUENETTA [with a letter] and [COSTARD the] Clown*  
 JAQUENETTA God bless the King!  
 KING What present hast thou there?  
 45 COSTARD Some certain treason.  
 KING What makes treason here?  
 COSTARD Nay, it makes nothing, sir.  
 KING If it mar nothing neither,  
 The treason and you go in peace away together.  
 50 JAQUENETTA I beseech your grace let this letter be read.  
 Our person misdoubts it; 'twas treason, he said.  
 KING Berowne, read it over. *[Berowne] reads the letter*  
 Where hadst thou it?  
 JAQUENETTA Of Costard.  
 55 KING Where hadst thou it?  
 COSTARD Of Dun Adramadio, Dun Adramadio.  
*[Berowne tears the letter into pieces]*  
 KING How now, what is in you? Why dost thou tear it?  
 60 BEROWNE A toy, my liege, a toy. Your grace needs not fear it.  
 LONGAVILLE It did move him to passion, and therefore let's hear it.  
 DUMAINE *[Picks up the pieces]* It is Berowne's writing and here is his  
 name.  
 BEROWNE Ah, you whoreson loggerhead, you were born to do me  
 65 shame.  
 Guilty, my lord, guilty! I confess, I confess!  
 KING What?  
 BEROWNE That you three fools lacked me fool to make up the mess.  
 He, he, and you – and you, my liege – and I,  
 70 Are prick-purses in love, and we deserve to die.

William SHAKESPEARE, *Love's Labour's Lost* [1598], The New  
 Cambridge Shakespeare,  
 Act IV, scene 3 (ll. 143-200), pp. 123-4.

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William SHAKESPEARE, *Love's Labour's Lost* [1598], The New  
 Cambridge Shakespeare,  
 Act IV, scene 3 (ll. 143-200), pp. 123-4.

Boyet: Now, madam, summon up your dearest spirits.

Consider who the King your father sends,  
To whom he sends, and what's his embassy:  
Yourself, held precious in the world's esteem,  
5 To parley with the sole inheritor  
Of all perfections that a man may owe,  
Matchless Navarre; the plea of no less weight  
Than Aquitaine, a dowry for a queen.  
Be now as prodigal of all dear grace  
10 As Nature was in making graces dear  
When she did starve the general world beside  
And prodigally gave them all to you.

Princess: Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,  
Needs not the painted flourish of your praise.

15 Beauty is bought by judgement of the eye,  
Not uttered by base sale of chapmen's tongues.  
I am less proud to hear you tell my worth  
Than you much willing to be counted wise  
In spending your wit in the praise of mine.  
20 But now to task the tasker. Good Boyet,  
You are not ignorant, all-telling fame  
Doth noise abroad, Navarre hath made a vow,  
Till painful study shall outwear three years,  
No woman may approach his silent court.  
25 Therefore to's seemeth it a needful course,  
Before we enter his forbidden gates,  
To know his pleasure; and in that behalf,  
Bold of your worthiness, we single you  
As our best-moving fair solicitor.  
30 Tell him the daughter of the King of France,  
On serious business, craving quick dispatch,  
Importunes personal conference with his grace.  
Haste, signify so much, while we attend,  
Like humble-visaged suitors, his high will.

35 Boyet: Proud of employment, willingly I go.

Princess: All pride is willing pride, and yours is so. *[Exit BOYET]*

Who are the votaries, my loving lords,  
That are vow-fellows with this virtuous duke?

Lord: Lord Longaville is one.

40 Princess: Know you the man?

Maria : I know him, madam. At a marriage feast  
 Between Lord Perigort and the beauteous heir  
 Of Jaques Falconbridge, solemnized  
 In Normandy, saw I this Longaville.  
 45 A man of sovereign parts he is esteemed,  
 Well fitted in arts, glorious in arms.  
 Nothing becomes him ill that he would well.  
 The only soil of his fair virtue's gloss,  
 If virtue's gloss will stain with any soil,  
 50 Is a sharp wit matched with **too blunt a will**,  
 Whose edge hath power to cut, whose will still wills  
 It should none spare that come within his power.

Princess : Some merry mocking lord, belike, is't so?

Maria : They say so most that most his humours know.

55 Princess : Such short-lived wits do wither as they grow.  
 Who are the rest?

Katherine : The young Dumain, a well-accomplished youth,  
 Of all that virtue love for virtue loved;  
 Most power to do most harm, least knowing ill,  
 60 For he hath wit to make an ill shape good,  
 And shape to win grace though he had no wit.  
 I saw him at the Duke Alençon's once,  
 And much too little of that good I saw  
 Is my report to his great worthiness.

65 Rosaline: Another of these students at that time  
 Was there with him, if I have heard a truth.  
 Berowne they call him, but a merrier man,  
 Within the limit of becoming mirth,  
 I never spent an hour's talk withal.  
 70 His eye begets occasion for his wit,  
 For every object that the one doth catch  
 The other turns to a mirth-moving jest,  
 Which his fair tongue, conceit's expositor,  
 Delivers in such apt and gracious words  
 75 That aged ears play truant at his tales,  
 And younger hearings are quite ravished,  
 So sweet and voluble is his discourse.

SHAKESPEARE, William. *Love's Labour Lost* [1598]. The New Cambridge Shakespeare. Act II, scene 1, (ll. 1-80), Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009.



— They came from Exeter, well provided with admiration for the use of Sir John Middleton, his family, and all his relations, and no niggardly proportion was now dealt out to his fair cousins, whom they declared to be the most beautiful, elegant, accomplished and agreeable girls they had ever beheld, and with whom they were particularly anxious to be better acquainted.— And to be better acquainted therefore, Elinor soon found was their inevitable lot, for as Sir John was entirely on the side of the Miss Steeles, their party would be too strong for opposition, and that kind of intimacy **must** be submitted to, which consists of sitting an hour or two together in the same room almost every day. Sir John could do no more; but he did not know that any more was required; to be together was, in his opinion, to be intimate, and while his continual schemes for their meeting were effectual, he had not a doubt of **their being established friends**.

To do him justice, he did every thing in his power to promote their unreserve, by making the Miss Steeles acquainted with whatever he knew or supposed of his cousins' situations in the most delicate particulars,— and Elinor had not seen them more than twice, before the eldest of them wished her joy on her sister's having been so lucky as to make a conquest of a very smart beau since she came to Barton.

"Twill be a fine thing to have her married so young to be sure," said she, "and I hear he is quite a beau, and prodigious handsome. And I hope you may have as good luck yourself soon, but perhaps you may have a friend in the corner already."

Elinor could not suppose that Sir John would be more nice in proclaiming his suspicions of her regard for Edward, than he had been with respect to Marianne; indeed it was rather his favourite joke of the two, as being somewhat newer and more conjectural; and since Edward's visit, they had never dined together, without his drinking to her best affections with so much significancy and so many nods and winks, as to excite general attention. The letter F— had been likewise invariably brought forward, and found productive of such countless jokes, that its character as the wittiest letter in the alphabet had been long established with Elinor.

The Miss Steeles, as she expected, had now all the benefit of these jokes, and in the eldest of them they raised a curiosity to know the name of the gentleman alluded to, which, though often impertinently expressed, was perfectly of a piece with her general inquisitiveness into the concerns of their family. But Sir John did not sport long with the curiosity which he delighted to raise, for he had at

least as much pleasure in telling the name, as Miss Steele had in hearing it.

45        'His name is Ferrars,' said he, in a very audible whisper; 'but pray do not tell it, for it's a great secret.'

      'Ferrars!' repeated Miss Steele; 'Mr. Ferrars is the happy man, is he? What! your sister-in-law's brother, Miss Dashwood? a very agreeable young man to be sure; I know him very well.'

50        'How can you say so, Anne?' cried Lucy, who generally made an amendment to all her sister's assertions. 'Though we have seen him once or twice at my uncle's, it is rather too much to pretend to know him very well.'

AUSTEN, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008. 94-95.

The dinner was a grand one, the servants were numerous, and every thing bespoke the Mistress's inclination for shew, and the Master's ability to support it. In spite of the improvements and additions which were making to the Norland estate, and in spite of its owner having once been within some thousand pounds of being obliged to sell out at a loss, nothing gave any symptom of that indigence which he had tried to infer from it;—no poverty of any kind, except of conversation, appeared—but there, the deficiency was considerable. John Dashwood had not much to say for himself that was worth hearing, and his wife had still less. But there was no peculiar disgrace in this, for it was very much the case with the chief of their visitors, who almost all laboured under one or other of these disqualifications for being agreeable—Want of sense, either natural or improved—want of elegance—want of spirits—or want of temper.

When the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room after dinner, this poverty was particularly evident, for the gentlemen *had* supplied the discourse with some variety—the variety of politics, inclosing land, and breaking horses—but then it was all over; and one subject only engaged the ladies till coffee came in, which was the comparative heights of Harry Dashwood, and Lady Middleton's second son William, who were nearly of the same age.

**Had** both the children been there, the affair might have been determined too easily by measuring them at once; but as Harry only was present, it was all conjectural assertion on both sides; and every body had a right to be equally positive in their opinion, and to repeat it over and over again as often as they liked.

The parties stood thus:

The two mothers, though each really convinced that her own son was the tallest, politely decided in favour of the other.

The two grandmothers, with not less partiality, but more sincerity, were equally earnest in support of their own descendant.

Lucy, who was hardly less anxious to please one parent than the other, thought the boys were both remarkably tall for their age, and could not conceive that there could be the smallest difference in the world between them; and Miss Steele, with yet greater address gave it, as fast as she could, in favour of each.

Elinor, having once delivered her opinion on William's side, **by which** she offended Mrs. Ferrars and Fanny still more, did not see the necessity of enforcing it by any farther assertion; and Marianne, when called on for her's, offended them all, by declaring that she had no opinion to give, as she had never thought about it.

AUSTEN, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008. 175-176.

Edward Ferrars was not recommended to their good opinion by any peculiar graces of person and address. He was not handsome, and his manners required intimacy to make them pleasing. He was too diffident to do justice to himself; but when his natural shyness was overcome, his behaviour gave every indication of an open affectionate heart. His understanding was good, and his education had given it solid improvement. But he was neither fitted by abilities nor disposition to answer the wishes of his mother and sister, who longed to see him distinguished—as—they hardly knew what. They wanted him to make a fine figure in the world in some manner or other. His mother wished to interest him in political concerns, to get him into parliament, or to see him connected with some of the great men of the day. Mrs. John Dashwood wished it likewise; but in the mean while, till one of these superior blessings could be attained, it would have quieted her ambition to see him driving a barouche. But Edward had no turn for great men or barouches. All his wishes centered in domestic comfort and the quiet of private life. Fortunately he had a younger brother who was more promising.

Edward had been staying several weeks in the house before he engaged much of Mrs. Dashwood's attention; for she was, at that time, in such affliction as rendered her careless of surrounding objects. She saw only that he was quiet and unobtrusive, and she liked him for it. He did not disturb the wretchedness of her mind by ill-timed conversation. She was first called to observe and approve him farther, by a reflection which Elinor chanced one day to make on the difference between him and his sister. It was a contrast which recommended him most forcibly to her mother.

'It is enough,' said she; 'to say that he is unlike Fanny is enough. It implies every thing amiable. I love him already.'

'I think you will like him,' said Elinor, 'when you know more of him.'

'Like him!' replied her mother with a smile. 'I can feel no sentiment of approbation inferior to love.'

'You may esteem him.'

'I have never yet known what it was to separate esteem and love.'

Mrs Dashwood now took pains to get acquainted with him. Her manners were attaching and soon banished his reserve. She speedily comprehended all his merits; the persuasion of his regard for Elinor perhaps assisted her penetration; but she really felt assured of his worth: and even that quietness of manner which militated against all her established ideas of what a young man's address ought to be, was no longer uninteresting when she knew his heart to be warm and his temper affectionate.

- 45        No sooner did she perceive any symptom of love in his behaviour to Elinor, than she considered their serious attachment as certain, and looked forward their marriage as rapidly approaching.

AUSTEN, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2008. 12-13.

'So then it all came out; and the long and the short of the matter, by all I can learn, seems to be this. Mr. Edward Ferrars, the very young man I used to joke with you about (but however, as it turns out, I am monstrous glad there never was any thing in it), Mr.  
5 Edward Ferrars, it seems, has been engaged above this twelvemonth to my cousin Lucy!—There's for you, my dear!—And not a creature knowing a syllable of the matter except Nancy!—Could you have believed such a thing possible?— There is no great wonder in their liking one another; but that matters **should** be brought so forward  
10 between them, and nobody suspect it! *That* is strange!—I never happened to see them together, or I am sure I should have found **it** out directly. Well, and so this was kept a great secret, for fear of Mrs. Ferrars, and neither she nor your brother or sister suspected a word of the matter;—till this very morning, poor Nancy, who, you know, is  
15 a well-meaning creature, but no conjurer, popt it all out. "Lord!" thinks she to herself, "they are all so fond of Lucy, to be sure they will make no difficulty about it;" and so, away she went to your sister, who was sitting all alone at her carpet-work, little suspecting what was to come—for she had just been saying to your brother, only  
20 five minutes before, that she thought to make a match between Edward and some Lord's daughter or other, I forget who. So you may think what a blow it was to all her vanity and pride. She fell into violent hysterics immediately, with such screams as reached your brother's ears, as he was sitting in his own dressing-room down  
25 stairs, thinking about writing a letter to his steward in the country. So up he flew directly, and a terrible scene took place, for Lucy was come to them by that time, little dreaming what was going on. Poor soul! I pity *her*. And I must say, I think she was used very hardly; for your sister scolded like any fury, and soon drove her into a fainting  
30 fit. Nancy, she fell upon her knees, and cried bitterly; and your brother, he walked about the room, and said he did not know what to do. Mrs. Dashwood declared they should not stay a minute longer in the house, and your brother was forced to go down upon *his* knees too, to persuade her to let them stay till they had packed up their  
35 clothes. *Then* she fell into hysterics again, and he was so frightened that he would send for Mr. Donovan, and Mr. Donovan found the house in all this uproar. The carriage was at the door ready to take my poor cousins away, and they were just stepping in as he came off; poor Lucy in such a condition, he says, she could hardly walk;  
40 and Nancy, she was almost as bad. [...]'

AUSTEN, Jane. *Sense and Sensibility*. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008. 194-195.

He knocked on my door soon after I was settled and said that he wanted to explain a few things to me—about unscrewing the light in the outer room, which I would not need, about the radiator and how to work the awning outside the window. He looked around at everything with gloom and mystification and said it was an awfully uncomfortable place for a lady.

"It's perfectly all right for me," I said, not as discouragingly as I would have liked to, because I always have a tendency to placate people whom I dislike for no good reason, or simply do not want to know. I make elaborate offerings of courtesy sometimes, in the foolish hope that they will go away and leave me alone.

"What you want is a nice easy chair to sit in, while you're waiting for inspiration to hit. I've got a chair down in the basement, all kinds of stuff down there since my mother passed on last year. There's a bit of carpet rolled up in a corner down there, it **isn't doing** anybody any good. We could get this place fixed up so's it'd be a lot more homelike for you."

But really, I said, but really I like it as it is.

"If you wanted to run up some curtains, I'd pay you for the material. Place needs a touch of colour, I'm afraid you'll get morbid sitting in here."

Oh, no, I said, and laughed, I'm sure I won't.

"It'd be a different story if you was a man. **A woman** wants things a bit cosier."

So I got up and went to the window and looked down into the empty Sunday street through the slats of the Venetian blind, to avoid the accusing vulnerability of his fat face and I tried out a cold voice that is to be heard frequently in my thoughts but has great difficulty getting out of my cowardly mouth. "Mr. Malley, please don't bother me about this any more. I said it suits me. I have everything I want. Thanks for showing me about the light."

The effect was devastating enough to shame me. "I certainly wouldn't dream of bothering you," he said, with precision of speech and aloof sadness. "I merely made these suggestions for your comfort. Had I realized I was in your way, I would of left some time ago." When he had gone I felt better, even a little exhilarated at my victory though still ashamed of how easy it had been. I told myself that he would have had to be discouraged sooner or later, it was better to have it over with at the beginning.

The following weekend he knocked on my door. His expression of humility was exaggerated, almost enough so to seem mocking, yet in another sense it was real and I felt unsure of myself.

"I won't take up a minute of your time," he said. "I never meant to be a nuisance. I just wanted to tell you I'm sorry I offended you last time and I apologize. Here's a little present if you will accept."

He was carrying a plant whose name I did not know; it had thick, glossy leaves and grew out of a pot wrapped lavishly in pink and silver foil.

50        "There," he said, arranging this plant in a corner of my room. "I don't want any bad feelings with you and me. I'll take the blame. And I thought, maybe she won't accept furnishings, but what's the matter with a nice little plant, that'll brighten things up for you."

Alice Munro, "The Office," *Dance of the Happy Shades*,  
Vintage, 2000 [1968], pp. 64-66.



I got up and found the Berrymans' "Danse Macabre" and put it on the record player and turned out the living-room lights. The curtains were only partly drawn. A street light shone obliquely on the windowpane, making a rectangle of thin dusty gold, in which the shadows of bare branches moved, caught in the huge sweet winds of spring. It was a mild black night when the last snow was melting. A year ago all this—the music, the wind and darkness, the shadows of the branches—would have given me tremendous happiness; when they did not do so now, but only called up tediously familiar, somehow humiliatingly personal thoughts, I gave up my soul for dead and walked into the kitchen and decided to get drunk.

No, it was not like that. I walked into the kitchen to look for a coke or something in the refrigerator, and there on the front of the counter were three tall beautiful bottles, all about half full of gold. But even after I had looked at them and lifted them to feel their weight I had not decided to get drunk; I had decided **to have a drink**.

Now here is where my ignorance, my disastrous innocence, comes in. It is true that I had seen the Berrymans and their friends drinking their highballs as casually as I would drink a coke, but I did not apply this attitude to myself. No; I thought of hard liquor as something to be taken in extremities, and relied upon for extravagant results, one way or another. My approach could not have been less casual if I had been the Little Mermaid drinking **the witch's crystal potion**. Gravely, with a glance at my set face in the black window above the sink, I poured a little whisky from each of the bottles (I think now there were two brands of rye and an expensive Scotch) until I had my glass full. For I had never in my life seen anyone pour a drink and I had no idea that people frequently diluted their liquor with water, soda, et cetera, and I had seen that the glasses the Berrymans' guests were holding when I came through the living room were nearly full.

I drank it off as quickly as possible. I set the glass down and stood looking at my face in the window, half expecting to see it altered. My throat was burning, but I felt nothing else. It was very disappointing, when I had worked myself up to it. But I was not going to let it go at that. I poured another full glass, then filled each of the bottles with water to approximately the level I had seen when I came in. I drank the second glass only a little more slowly than the first. I put the empty glass down on the counter with care, perhaps feeling in my head a rustle of things to come, and went and sat down on a chair in the living room. I reached up and turned on a floor lamp beside the chair, and the room jumped on me.

Alice Munro, "An Ounce of Cure," *Dance of the Happy Shades* [1968], London: Vintage, 2000, pp. 79-80